

Train en route from Stockholm to Geneva

November 20, 1946.

Dear Friends:

In Japan there was a current saying that if one wants to write a book on Japan it must be done within the first 30 days of one's stay, or else it was necessary to wait for 30 years. I have been in Sweden one day beyond the month, and having had unusual opportunities of meeting outstanding people in many different areas of life, as a travelling YWCA member always does, and also enough time to do some reading on Sweden, I must admit to confusion of mind about many things. It has been a great privilege travelling with Miss Marion Royce, a Canadian on the World's YWCA Staff whose special interest is Social questions, and for whom many of the interviews were arranged. It is simple to write about the obvious of modern "Sweden of the Middle Way", the excellent modern housing and apartments, advanced social legislation, co-operatives that include a large percentage of the population, artistic mass production, the beautiful textiles and silver designed by the best artists of the country, interesting historical spots of the land of the Vikings, etc., but when one goes beneath the surface, there seem to be an unusual number of paradoxical situations.

The first week-end was spent at Lund in the southern part of Sweden, which is a rich agricultural section very like Denmark, and the seat of one of the two old universities, and a cathedral that just celebrated its 800th anniversary. The diocese of Lund was in 1103 the largest in Europe, containing Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

One is amazed at the number of apartment houses in small towns of 30,000-40,000, largely built in the last four years and we were taken by a young police woman to see the apartment where she lived with her parents. It was in one of the many apartment houses financed by a cooperative loan and building society (H.S.B.) which has 70 organizations throughout the country and a National Federation, and the members of which, by paying an initial sum of capital and nominal rents for upkeep, gradually acquire full ownership. There was a group of five buildings set not too close together, with various community features, such as playgrounds for children and laundries, etc. The man who explained their system of cooperative management said that many people in Sweden when they reach the age of 50 decide that an individual house involves too much hard manual labour and go into apartments, and there are therefore many people of that age in apartments, although some single women as well. There were no women on the management committee.

Just across from the very modern apartment houses were the barracks that had been used for refugees from all over Europe. They were very well arranged with bunks, paper-covered mattresses of straw and good sanitary arrangements. One senses a feeling of inferiority and frustration on the part of some Swedes because their Government remained neutral during the war, and an attempt to compensate for that by assisting refugees in as many ways as possible. When one can see across to Sweden from some places in Denmark, can cross over from the various Baltic states in any kind of an old small boat, it is not difficult to imagine what great numbers of people took the risks of attempting to escape from an occupied country to

a Neutral one, and the ingenious ways in which the resistance movements assisted them. It is said that there were as many as 200,000 to 300,000 refugees in Sweden at times, a large number for a population of between 6 and 7 million. Many of them are intellectual groups, especially those still remaining and the government has given grants of money for more or less made jobs in the universities and other places. For instance at the University of Lund there is a Polish Institute where reports and studies are being made of the atrocities committed by Germans in Poland and the history of refugees. One comes across the refugees everywhere and such tragic stories. Last Sunday in Upsala at the Cathedral there was a special service for the Latvian refugees, commemorating the founding of the Latvian State, which is now non-existent. A Latvian pastor took part of the service, Latvian hymns had been translated into Swedish, but I noticed that many Latvians sang in their own tongue and when their national anthem was sung there was evidence of great emotional strain. A very fine opera singer from Riga, whom I had met previously at the YWCA sang a number of solos.

Stockholm was the next stop of a number of days. Stockholm means an island (holm) built on logs (Stock) and was probably first built of logs brought in by the ice. It was founded in 1250 by Birger Jarl (the name of the street the YWCA is on) whose son became King of Sweden. It is a beautiful city of many hills, rocks and islands, lying between the salt water of the Baltic Sea and the fresh water of Lake Malar. The children for whom swimming instruction is compulsory can choose between salt and fresh water and there are no end of good beaches. Much of the traffic is by water, and there are boats moored everywhere. The slogan for Sweden is not "Two cars in every garage", but seems to be "a sailing craft for every family and a bicycle for every member of the family". The arrangements for parking bicycles are many and most efficient. The public buildings, old and modern, are very beautiful, and the Town Hall built during World War I is considered by some to be the finest piece of modern architecture in Europe. A guide takes parties through at 10 o'clock each morning, and Miss Royce and I attached ourselves to a group, but unfortunately the explanations in Swedish were largely lost to us. The paintings are very fine and many of the murals were done by Prince Eugen, brother of the King. The Council Chamber where the Council of 100 has its meetings is a magnificent room in rose and beautiful rather light Swedish wood. There are 27 women out of 100 in the Council, and as there was a session one evening, while we were in the city, we took the opportunity to go into the gallery and wave at Elsa Cedergren (one of the Vice-Presidents of the World's YWCA) who sits in the Council.

The streets of Stockholm are piled full of wood, sometimes two or three rows on wide streets with boulevards, and is one of the government war-time measures to relieve the fuel situation. No coal could be imported from the usual sources - England, Germany and Poland - and Sweden had to find her own fuel. The products of the forests are rigidly controlled by the government and there is not much loss by fire, as fires are absolutely forbidden in the forests (hard on picnic lovers) and the reforestation policy is very far sighted. The wood, mostly birch, was cut according to government orders, piled in the streets to dry and then rationed. Apparently there is practically no thieving, which is proof of the honesty of the Swedes. During the war many buildings were poorly heated and all hot water was cut off.

The city of Stockholm owns and operates gas, light, water, bus and train service, and also owns many of the areas outside of the city boundaries and is planning an underground system so that there can be rapid transportation to expanding suburban areas. Swedes love their little gardens, and there are many allotment gardens near the city with summer cabins on them, but here too, one cannot indulge one's individual fancies, for style and everything is supervised. The maximum size is 22 square metres of ground. The cabins are very attractive, usually curtained and provision is made for the garden tools and the inevitable coffee and smorgos (open sandwiches) that are consumed many times during the day. With such long hours of daylight in the summer one can read a paper outside till 11 p.m., and the people need to spend as much time as possible outside and store up sunshine for the winter, when for two months at least the children go and return to school in the pitch darkness. School begins at 8 a.m. and closes at 3 p.m. for six days in the week. During the summer vacation there are few children that do not get an opportunity to go either to the seaside or the country and the government pays their railway fares.

The very old historic part of the city of Stockholm is being carefully preserved, but the authorities have not hesitated to tear down buildings and widen streets in other places, so that there are many streets with wide boulevards in the middle. There are a great number of new apartment areas, often in the hilly sections and on different levels, and the large pine trees have been left standing which takes away that bare forbidding look of piles of buildings. There are said to be no slums in Sweden and 47 per cent. of the apartment houses have been erected since 1920 and many more are in the process of building throughout the country. One of the newer apartment houses I visited was for single women with a maximum salary of 4,500 kr. a year (about \$1,500). There were two kinds of one-roomed apartments, with and without bath, but all had toilettes and wash basins and very compact attractive kitchenettes, with stainless steel equipment. (Some of our steel ingots go to Sweden, the Canadian Trade Commissioner told me). Every one must take 25 dinners per month (about \$12) and no more than three guests are allowed per person a month. There is much self service, so that five maids can take care of the buildings and food for 200 persons. It is not haphazard care either, for the whole of Sweden is scrubbed and polished till it glistens.

However, in spite of all I have said about the housing, there is much left to be desired, for according to an official report, 1/3 of the dwellings in the city of Stockholm consist of one room and kitchen - most inadequate for the family living. If it is true that the closer people live together, the less they like each other, family life must suffer because of such crowded quarters in spite of all the modern gadgets. The birth rate is low in Sweden and as in many other countries there is great concern about it. There are municipality dwellings where people with larger families get larger apartments for reduced rents. For three children there is a reduction of 30 per cent.; for four, 40 per cent.; and for five, 50 per cent. and correspondingly more rooms. It sounds like the Soviet slogan "Each according to his need".

The principal of a Girls' High School in Vasteras was down in Switzerland for the Leaders' Course at Schloss Mûnigen, and urged Miss

Royce and myself to visit her town, which is several hours from Stockholm. Vasteras is a very old town and is the place where the final break was made with Rome and Sweden became a Protestant country. There is a fine old cathedral and as we struck a holiday (commemoration of the King Augustus Adolphus), there was a special service with 900 school children singing, accompanied by a school orchestra. They stood up in front of the altar and the music was all concentrated at the beginning of the service so that the children could go home when finished - there was not seating capacity for them. Vasteras is a splendid example of the decentralization of industry in Sweden. The town was historically interesting but stagnant when ASEA - one of the largest engineering firms in the country - decided to locate there. The factories cover a tremendous area and are ablaze day and night. To encourage labour to go to these smaller centres, special inducements were offered, particularly housing. The social worker - a young Finnish woman - took us to see the big housing area where there are two thousand people living. The site is most attractive, hilly with rocks protruding and many large pines, and the houses set far apart, so that the whole section looks like a park. In the building which houses the central heating and hot water plants, there are community baths - Finnish, tubs and showers - and on the upper floor is a community laundry where the women were working and having a real social time. One can get laundry done at nominal rates, or do one's own, but each family gets a turn only about once a month. That explains the large trousseaus of 100 or more sheets, and towels which may easily outlast one generation. Swedish women still go in for elaborate sheets, embroidery and inserts of lace. In the community centre was a day nursery, most attractive rooms with light birch modern furniture and artistic hangings, that can be used for social affairs in the evening. There is also provision made to keep children for periods of days or weeks, when mothers are ill and unable to look after the children. The rate per day in a ward of the municipally-owned hospitals is about 75¢.

We saw several apartments for families and also one for young boys up to 18 years. They have double rooms, and each house has 10 boys with a married couple in charge. When they reach the age of 18 they must leave.

One hears much of Denmark's folk schools, because they were founded by the famous religious leader - Dr. Grundtvig, but not so much of Sweden's. The beginning of the latter was marked by an historical event, namely the reform of the Riksdag (Parliament) in 1866, and the idea was to train adults for citizenship and their place in the community. Women are admitted at 16 years and men at 18. The Swedish folk schools have recruited more young people from industrial areas than has Denmark, but probably have not the same religious emphasis as the Danish schools. The extent of the democracy in the Scandinavian countries is no doubt due to the development of their adult education, which does not attempt to educate out of occupational places in the community, but to emphasize the value of all work and responsibility to the community.

Sigtuna is a place well known to religious leaders and is the centre of the church folk colleges. Someone said that Sigtuna was inspired by Archbishop Söderbloom and a group of young men who "discovered the church". This statement was somewhat puzzling when I heard it, but after being in the country for several weeks, one begins to have some understanding.

Just as Swedes are born Swedish citizens, so are they born members of the Lutheran state church, and no one can resign from membership, unless he goes into another communion. As someone said "We have religious freedom, but no freedom to be a heathen if we wish". The "free churches" are few in number, many of them sects, and the cultural and educational standards of the clergy are often lower than that of the State church, which means that the State church is handicapped by not having the stimulation of a strong and influential minority - a sort of "His Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition"! There has been a Labour Government for a long time and as labour has been greatly influenced by the German Trade Union Movement, it is very Marxian and there is not the religious influence that there is in Great Britain, where the early labour and social leaders were motivated, generally speaking, by Christian convictions - and many came out of the non-conformist minority group.

The Church Assembly which meets regularly every 5 years, with occasional Special Sessions was in Session while I was in Stockholm. It consists of 60 members - half clergy and half lay. There are two women, one of whom I had known before, and she told me that when the lay members are elected in their community as all electors are members of the State Church, a communist can be elected, or anyone else who had absolutely no convictions about the church - in fact may be opposed. The motive behind this is to see how State funds are being used, i.e. what we are getting for our taxes. We had an interview with the woman (she herself has four teen-age children) who is the secretary of the Youth Commission appointed in 1939 by the Government, or by the King and Parliament as the phrase goes. The report revealed pretty much the same conditions as our Canadian Commission discovered, and representations are to be made to Parliament. When Miss Royce asked a question about the cooperation of the church in a youth programme, the response did not imply any desire for cooperation with the church, at least on the part of the two secretaries.

I have said little about the YWCA, but to know what the place and function of the YWCA is in any country, one needs to know the background; voluntary religious organizations in Sweden have much competition, and many problems. It may be the function of the YWCA in many countries to pioneer in some forms of social thinking, but in a country so advanced socially as Sweden, perhaps the function of the YWCA is to help its members to avoid social complacency and, with state enterprise so highly developed, to preserve a sense of individual initiative. I realized in a new way the value of a World's YWCA that can help national organizations study their strengths and weaknesses, and arrange a programme of mutual service on that basis.

One is often asked how Christian voluntary organizations finance themselves in countries where there is no State-supported church, nor a highly socialist government that is ready to give grants to many forms of social work. In a progressive socialist state one needs to recognize the weakening effect it can have on the courage and initiative necessary to raise money for causes that may not be recognized by governments as of great value to society, and depend entirely for support upon the convictions and enthusiasm of its individual members. The more advanced a state is in collective government enterprises, the more necessary it is to have a broad base of citizens with consciences sensitive to the values and

principles of democracy, and with vision. Having lived in the Orient for many years where standards of living and wealth are much lower than in many parts of the world and seen the impossible become the possible as far as money raising is concerned, perhaps I may be forgiven if I am somewhat skeptical as to Sweden's inability to raise money for anything she really has faith in.

The stores are full of beautiful goods and clothing, canned fruits and juices from U.S.A., apples and pears from Oregon, oranges from South Africa, figs from Turkey, hot house grapes from Belgium, etc. Besides, according to an official bulletin, after Swedes have paid for their food, rent, clothing, etc., they have 30 per cent. left over for other expenditures, which the statements said was high in comparison with other countries and was proof of the high standard of living.

In every country I have been I have met ex-Japan friends. Some who receive this letter will remember Carolyn Marsh of the Osaka YWCA. Her husband, Prof. Hörner, is a geologist connected with Upsala University, and I enjoyed staying in their home for five days. The son, Sven, is 12 years old and speaks English and Swedish equally well. I also spent a day with Mrs. Gadelius whose husband was in Tokyo many years in business. A member of the firm remained in Japan all during the war, and as soon as conditions permit Taro, the eldest son and the only one married of the family, wants to go back. Mrs. Tham (Eurasian) also lives in Stockholm.

I started this letter yesterday just after pulling out of Copenhagen and we are now going along the Rhine. This part of Germany I did not see on the way to Sweden, but the cities and towns here, too, are masses of rubble and shells of buildings. The land of the countryside is well tilled and the grass is still green here. Tonight I expect to arrive in Geneva.

My plans are at present to remain in Geneva till after the January meeting of the Executive, and then get the first fast ship to America. In December I'll take a daily French lesson with two hours or more of study, but probably I'll be too busy later to continue, for preparations for committee meetings will begin early in the year.

By the time this letter reaches you, it will be Christmas and you will be much too busy to read such a long report, but you can put it away till after the rush is over. I send my Christmas greetings and best wishes for 1947.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) EMMA R. KAUFMAN

November 26

P.S. - I had the opportunity of going out to Bossey immediately after arriving in Geneva to have tea with the students at the first course at the Ecumenical Institute, arranged under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. The aim is to develop Christian leadership among young people of all nations, and there are now 40 students from 17 different nations. There is one Russian student who is a member of the Russian Orthodox community in Paris. As the course is primarily for European students, the official languages are French or German. There are five students from Great Britain and one from the U.S.A. More are expected from the latter country for the spring course; unfortunately there is no Canadian.

Dr. John C. Bennet of the U.S.A., who is one of the lecturers at the Institute, made the following statements in a recent number of "Christianity and Crisis":-

"The second World War which divided humanity much more deeply than the first World War, divided the Church less. . . . It would be no exaggeration to say that among the leaders of the Churches on both sides of the war, reconciliation has gone farther than was the case eight or ten years after the Armistice of 1918."

Yours sincerely,

EMMA R. KAUFMAN

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